

# WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala to give Class of 2022 Commencement speech

*Okonjo-Iweala is the first woman and first African leader of the WTO after taking office in March 2021*

By Kristina Chen  
PUBLISHER

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala MCP '78 PhD '81, director-general of the World Trade Organization (WTO), will speak at the 2022 OneMIT Commencement Ceremony on Killian Court May 27.

Okonjo-Iweala is the first woman and first African leader of the WTO after taking office in March 2021. She served as Nigeria's finance minister from 2003–06 and 2011–15, as well as foreign minister in 2006;

she was the first woman to hold both positions.

Okonjo-Iweala is also an alumna of MIT, having graduated with a Master of City Planning in 1978 and a PhD in regional economics and development from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in 1981. She earned her undergraduate degree in economics from Harvard University in 1976.

"Being honored as the 2022 Commencement speaker of my beloved alma mater, MIT, brings me great joy," Okonjo-Iweala told MIT News.

James Poterba, professor of economics and chair of the Commencement Committee, told MIT News that Okonjo-Iweala's "career shows by example how the tools acquired in the halls of MIT can be deployed to improve the human condition."

President of the Graduate Student Council, AJ Miller G, added that Okonjo-Iweala is "an incredible example of the positive impact our alumni have on the world today."

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BEN KETTLE—THE TECH

Workers in drysuits and flippers collect cones from the ice on the Charles River Saturday afternoon. Cones were hoisted to a truck as the workers collected them.

# President Reif to step down from leadership role at the end of 2022

*Reif is grateful for Institute's progress and high ranking*

By Wenbo Wu  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

President L. Rafael Reif wrote that he will step down as president "at the end of 2022" after serving in the position since 2012 in an email to the MIT community Feb. 10.

Reif wrote that remaining as president "through December will allow time for the MIT Corporation to conduct a search for MIT's 18th president" and "smooth the transition to a new administration."

This period of time will also be for "advancing important ongoing work," including "implementing recommendations of Task Force 2021 and Beyond," continuing joint online efforts at MIT with Harvard, and "completing a range of crucial work to strengthen MIT's community, diversity, culture and values."

Reif cited "wonderfully evident" "physical expressions" of what the MIT community has accomplished

over the past decade, including MIT.nano, New Vassar, the new music building near Kresge Auditorium, the planned transformation of the Met Warehouse by the School of Architecture and Planning, and the location for the future Schwartzman College of Computing. Reif wrote that MIT "also bears witness to this community's thoughtful strategy" toward tackling COVID-19.

In addition to these visible forms of change, Reif wrote that his decade as president "has included many shared advances less visible but no less important," including a "broad new emphasis on making MIT a more humane, welcoming community" where everyone can "thrive." He cited MIT's Fast Forward climate action plan; developments in digital learning; the Quest for Intelligence; role in shaping "the national dialogue about the work of the future" and U.S. "competitiveness in science and technology";

progress of "fruitful alliances with industry, from computing to climate"; Solve; and the completion of the Campaign for a Better World.

"Thanks to the exceptional efforts and impact of the people of MIT in research, education and innovation, the Institute consistently ranks among the very top universities in the world," Reif wrote.

Reif then thanked the Academic Council, Undergraduate Association, Graduate Student Council, Presidential Advisory Cabinet, alumni, postdocs, support and administrative staff, MIT Corporation, faculty, and senior leadership team.

"On my watch, our community has also endured some very painful moments," Reif wrote. "While nothing I can say can erase or make up for that pain, I am profoundly grateful that, in the best MIT tradition, we have together been able to face hard facts and correct course for the Institute."



FRANKIE SCHULTE—THE TECH

After missing their planned Ring Delivery two years ago, Ring Delivered gave seniors a chance to gather and celebrate at Boston Park Plaza Sunday.

# Martin Schmidt reflects on his time as provost

*Schmidt is set to become the next president of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute*

By Caroline Powers

MIT Provost Martin Schmidt PhD '88 will be stepping down from his position on July 1, 2022 and assuming the role of president at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), President L. Rafael Reif announced in an email to the MIT community on Nov. 23.

After serving as associate provost for five years, Schmidt took on the role of provost in 2014. During this time, he helped launch a number of initiatives, including the MIT 2030 renewal plan, the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing, and the Institute-wide Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Before becoming an academic

administrator, Schmidt served as a faculty member of MIT's Electrical Engineering and Computer Science department and the director of MIT's Microsystems Technology Laboratories where he pursued his passion for nanotechnology.

Schmidt will be replaced as provost by former MIT Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart SM '86, PhD '88.

*The Tech spoke with Schmidt over Zoom to reflect on his role as Provost. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

**The Tech: What are your motivations for stepping down as MIT Provost?**

**Martin Schmidt:** I would characterize myself as having some bizarre

form of an attention deficit disorder in the sense that I get really interested in things, and then at some point I think "okay, been there, done that." Before being provost, I got to work with a lot of interesting faculty across MIT, and the administering role is very similar. When I was the director of the Microsystems Lab, I stepped down after six years because I sort of felt like I had done it, learned a lot, had a lot of excitement of doing it, but at some point, you're doing the same things that you did six years ago. And so I said, "maybe there's an opportunity for somebody else to do this job." I felt that way as associate provost, too, and certainly as provost. It's been a great time, but I could always

see myself at some point wanting to step down.

**TT: Why did you choose the role of president at RPI?**

**Schmidt:** I never had aspirations to go beyond being provost, and my intentions had been up until very recently to go back to the department and get into some really interesting research and teaching areas. But RPI reached out about the position. I initially was not convinced that it was right for me, but I started looking at what they were doing, and what opportunities they had and challenges they faced, and it looked like an interesting problem set. After spending

Provost, Page 2

## IN SHORT

Monday, Feb. 21 is **Presidents' Day**, no classes will be held; Tuesday, Feb. 22 will adopt a Monday class schedule.

Feb. 18 is the deadline for submission of the **Minor Completion Form** for final-term seniors.

Undergraduate registration for **fourth quarter PE classes** open on March 2.

**Add date** is March 4.

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**Send news and tips** to [news@tech.mit.edu](mailto:news@tech.mit.edu).

## FOSSIL FUELS

MIT must divest now.  
**OPINION, p. 10**



## COHEN GROUP

Why do biological materials behave the way they do?  
**SCIENCE, p. 4**



## THAI FOOD

Searching for the spices and tastes of home.  
**ARTS, p. 6**

## PROUSTIAN?

Eating tofu pudding was the closest thing I had to a time machine.  
**CAMPUS LIFE, p. 11**

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WEATHER

Refrain from rain’s domain

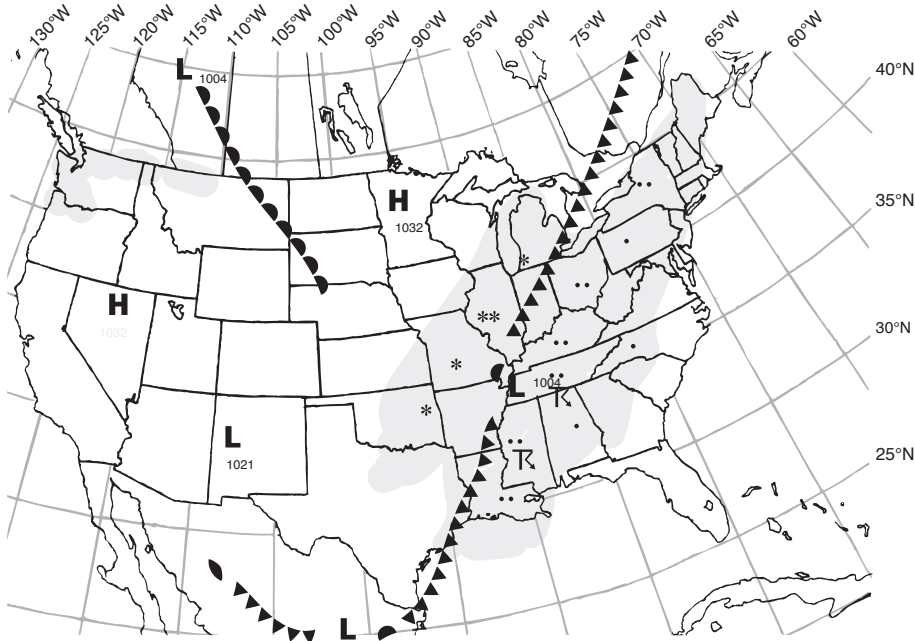
By Phoebe Lin  
STAFF METEOROLOGIST

A powerful cross-country storm is making its way over the eastern U.S. this week, causing storm warnings, flood alerts, powerful gusts, and even tornado warnings to be issued for 28 million people along its path. Boston will brace for the worst of the storm on Friday morning,

with powerful gusts expected late Thursday night into Friday. What a whirlwind of events! Keep your windows closed and your coats wrapped tightly around you as we navigate one of these last passing winter storms. If you’ve been keeping track of temperatures, you’ll notice that we’ve had a couple of warm days that are foreshadowing the return of spring!

Extended Forecast

**Today:** Mostly cloudy. High around 56°F (13°C). Southwest winds around 20-30 mph.  
**Tonight:** Rainy. Low around 51°F (11°C), with south winds around 25-30 mph.  
**Tomorrow:** Heavy rain, then sunny. High around 57°F (14°C) and low around 24°F (-4°C). Winds peaking at around 25 mph.  
**Saturday:** Chance snow/rain. High around 36°F (2°C) and low around 20°F (-7°C). Northwest winds 12-17 mph.  
**Sunday:** Sunny. High around 36°F (2°C) and low around 30°F (-1°C). West winds 10-15 mph.



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, February 17, 2022

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols	Other Symbols
<b>H</b> High Pressure	Trough	Snow	Fog
<b>L</b> Low Pressure	Warm Front	Rain	Thunderstorm
Hurricane	Cold Front	Light	Haze
	Stationary Front	Moderate	Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech
		Heavy	



MIT students learn to square dance with Tech Squares, MIT’s premiere Square and Round dancing club, Feb. 1.

Geathers: Okonjo-Iweala is a ‘pioneer of change’ and serves as an ‘ideal role model’

Commencement, from Page 1

In addition to serving as director-general of the WTO, Okonjo-Iweala is an African Union Special Envoy to mobilize international financial support for the fight against COVID-19 and World Health Organization Special Envoy for Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator.

Okonjo-Iweala is an expert in global finance, economics, and international development, having worked as a development economist at the World Bank for 25 years. From 2007 to 2011, Okonjo-Iweala was managing director of operations at the World Bank, responsible for its portfolio in Africa, South Asia, Europe, and Central Asia. While at the World Bank, Okonjo-Iweala worked on initiatives to assist low-income countries and raised \$49.3 billion in grants and credit for the world’s poorest countries.

President L. Rafael Reif told MIT News that students on the Institute’s Commencement Committee “were eager” for MIT to “seek someone with high moral character and a demonstrated commitment to societal impact.”

“As a groundbreaking pioneer of change, Okonjo-Iweala shines and serves as an ideal role model to all who prioritize gender parity and equitable policies,” Danielle Geathers ’22, Undergraduate Association president, added.

President of the Class of 2022 Council Temi Omitoogun ’22 told MIT News that “after so many tough years, it will be nice to hear from someone who shows some of the heights that we can reach given the foundation of our MIT experience.”

Previously, Okonjo-Iweala addressed candidates at the 2016 Doctoral Hooding Ceremony; in her speech, she spoke on issues including economic inequality, cli-

mate change, access to water, and new health problems.

Okonjo-Iweala will speak at the OneMIT Commencement Ceremony on the morning of May 27, following the Advanced Degree Ceremonies taking place on May 26 and prior to the Bachelor’s Degree Conferral taking place on Briggs Field on the afternoon of May 28.

Recent Commencement speakers include civil rights lawyer and activist Bryan Stevenson (2021) and retired Navy four-star admiral William McRaven (2020), who both gave their speeches virtually during webcast Commencements. The last Commencement speaker to deliver their address at an in-person ceremony was politician and philanthropist Michael Bloomberg (2019), who was preceded by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg (2018) and Apple CEO Tim Cook (2017).

Schmidt will ‘miss the interactions’ with MIT students, faculty colleagues, and staff

Provost, from Page 1

enough time thinking about it and talking with my family, we decided, you know, why not? For me, it was hard to estimate the gravitational pull you can have to your undergraduate alma mater, and being able to have the capstone of my academic career be returning to help lead my undergraduate alma mater also was a big factor.

**TT: What are you most proud of accomplishing during your time as provost at MIT?**

**Schmidt:** When I first became associate provost, that’s just when we were starting to wrap our arms around the physical deferred maintenance problem on the campus. We developed the MIT 2030 plan, which involved major comprehensive renovations of many MIT buildings. It felt good to know we were helping move the campus to a better physical condition. Helping to establish the Schwarzman college was a lot of work, but also very exciting. We’re all happy to see it growing, particularly as it’s addressing the social and ethical responsibilities of computing and figuring out how to advance all the disciplines at MIT. I’m very optimistic about that. The last thing I would say is that we’ve been very intentional in trying to make MIT a more welcoming and inclusive community. We’ve still got work to do, but

I’m excited about the momentum that’s building.

**TT: What do you wish you would have been able to do as provost?**

**Schmidt:** Now that there’s a clearer sense of what we need to do and how we need to do it with the DEI strategic action plan, there’s a sense of impatience because we can see a path to the future. In some respects, I wish we were further along. I’m seeing signs of great progress being made in various parts of the Institute based on some of the investments we’re making, so envisioning what that looks like at scale, well, you wish you were here for it.

**TT: What efforts are you hoping that the next provost will continue and/or begin?**

**Schmidt:** Cindy and I worked very closely over the years, so I’m thrilled that she’s taking the position. I hope and expect that she’ll actually do a better job than I could have. I wouldn’t want to prescribe what Cindy should do. I’m confident that she’s going to do things that will be great in advancing the Institute.

**TT: You’ve been at MIT for many decades. So what are you going to miss most about the MIT community?**

**Schmidt:** I’m going to miss the interactions I’ve had with the students and my faculty colleagues. Part of the joy of being here has

been making those relationships and working together. I’m also really gonna miss the incredibly dedicated staff that I’ve had the benefit of interacting with, particularly in my head administrative roles. A lot of the people that work in MIT are really inspired by the mission, and the passion that the staff bring to their work is infectious. It motivates you to do as much as you can to help support them and help move the institute in a direction we can be proud of.

**TT: You mentioned that ethics in engineering is important to you. What do you think MIT has been doing well in educating our engineers in ethics? And what do you think we could do better?**

**Schmidt:** One of the phrases that our chancellor used, when she was Dean of School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, is that we need to create habits of mind. To me, that was a profound point. What we don’t necessarily need is one class on ethics and require it of everyone, because potentially in one ear and out the other. Some of the things that we’ve been doing in college, like the case studies, allow us to pepper in these concepts throughout the curriculum in a way that really builds that habit of mind. I see it as a really big experiment, but I think this basic approach is really great.



Students and MIT community members enjoy a Valentine’s Day Dance Social, organized by MIT Ballroom Dance Club, in La Sala Feb. 12.



Burton Conner holds spring FLEX Saturday giving students an opportunity to learn more about their dorm culture for their reopening this fall.



# Ring Premiere held for Class of 2024 in Kresge Auditorium

## RingComm relieved to know from event's high turnout that the MIT Brass Rat tradition will live on

By Caitlin Fukumoto  
EDITOR

Ring Premiere for the MIT Class of 2024 took place in MIT's Kresge Auditorium Feb. 11. The Class of 2024 Ring Committee (RingComm) presented a ring that "encapsulates the special moments, events, and stories that connect the entire class of 2024," according to the Brass Rat 2024 website.

RingComm revealed the design of the new ring Friday evening to thunderous applause. The bezel design of the 2024 Brass Rat features the signature beaver in the Charles River with MIT's Great Dome head-on in the background, a change from past designs which placed the beaver on the Harvard Bridge with a perspective looking up-river. The ring design pays tribute to the Class of 2024's "unconventional college experience" due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the design includes an oak leaf to represent the fall semester the class completed remotely. The design also includes a hacker's map that RingComm says is "the most accurate map of the main campus underground" possible.

Ring Premiere was only the second time the Class of 2024 has been brought together, the last time being Sophomore Formal in October 2021.

The price of the Brass Rat has slightly decreased from \$1194 last year to \$1114 for a medium 14k yellow gold ring. However, ring pricing is still trending upward; a similar ring five years ago cost \$900.

RingComm partnered with the Accessing Resources at MIT (ARM) Coalition to offer \$180 subsidies to sophomores who filled out an application by Jan. 31. This subsidy covered the cost of an Ultrium ring plus shipping and handling, but could be applied to any ring.

In an interview with The Tech, RingComm Premiere Chair Ben Rich '24 stated that "a large portion of RingComm's funds is allocated to subsidies and financial aid" and noted that the Brass Rat Melt Project also helps to provide subsidies.

Rich stated that over 250 students initially applied for Brass Rat subsidies. He stated that "now that Premiere has happened," RingComm has continued to receive emails from students about subsidies and is "trying to work with everyone" to offer subsidies to these students as well.

Subsidy decisions are made by the ARM coalition. Rich stated that "the goal is to get a ring for everyone" rather than "trying to decide" between subsidy applicants and awarding different amounts to different students.

RingComm Social Chair Frankie Schulte '24 said to The Tech that one of his "favorite things about RingComm" is their "ability to accommodate" students who might need "extra help" to get a ring.

Rich said it was "definitely a relief" to have Ring Premiere behind him. He stated that the first few weeks of school were "a lot of stress, trying to finish everything off" and prepare for the event but thinks Premiere "went well."

Rich expressed a concern that "coming off of COVID semester, not as many people would be aware" of the Brass Rat tradition or "know what Ring Premiere is."

Schulte stated that usually, "one of the main driving factors that gets people to know about the rings and buy the rings is seeing it on upperclassmen." He said it was a "genuine concern" that sophomores may not be as "aware" of the Brass Rat tradition. Schulte said that following the high turnout at Premiere, it now seems that "the tradition will still live on," which is "very, very relieving to know."

Rich said that RingComm has "gotten a ton of help" from both 2022 RingComm and 2023 RingComm. He noted that he had to "go all the way back to the '22s" for advice on Ring Premiere with the Class of 2024 being the "first class in two years that's going to be able



ALEXA SIMAO—THE TECH

The Class of 2024 RingComm reveals one face of the class's brass rat at Ring Premiere Friday.

to have both" Premiere and Ring Delivery.

Rich also acknowledged the help of members of MIT's administration in "getting everything organized," namely Associate Director of Student Activities Jacklyn Liberman, who has "been with the [Brass Rat] project for six years now."

Rich said that he is "so thankful so many people showed up" to Ring Premiere, and that the high

energy and positive reception of the event "made RingComm's night."

RingComm is hosting in-person ordering events at which sophomores can be sized for their ring and displaying different bezel sizes, metals, and ring finishes this week. Sophomores have until Feb. 18 to be sized for and order their rings.

Frankie Schulte '24 is the Social Media Editor at The Tech.



KEVIN LY—THE TECH

MIT Mocha Moves presents their annual Mocha Show with this year's theme Mo'Mixtape Friday.

# Ring Delivered held for the Class of 2022 at Boston Park Plaza Feb. 13

## Council faced challenge in navigating COVID-19 restrictions

By Joyce Yuan

Ring Delivered, a special dance to commemorate the ring delivery for the Class of 2022, took place at Boston Park Plaza on Feb. 13. Approximately 700 seniors attended the event organized by the Class of 2022 Council.

Ring delivery plans, usually during one's sophomore spring, had been halted in the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19. Students proposed to still hold a ring delivery ceremony, echoing the sentiment that COVID-19 would not stop them from such an experience.

Class Council Secretary Stephanie Zhang '22 shared some insight into the process and accompanying challenges. Zhang said in an interview with The Tech, "We started planning this event back in late October/early November of last semester, but we couldn't

find a good date that would work given the semester was wrapping up and people would be busy, so we decided on a weekend early in February."

The council then booked the venue, publicized the event, catered food, and prepared merch. Class President Temi Omitoogun '22 said in an interview with The Tech that "it was a challenge navigating the different [COVID-19] restrictions, such as the Institute policy for allowing food at events having changed a few days before the event."

Attendees dressed up, took pictures, ate food, explored the venue, and danced in the company of their friends. "The food and the DJ and the glass tumblers and the photographers were all such a hit!" Zhang said.

Omitoogun said that he was "really proud of how the coun-

cil worked together to host this event, and it was truly a highlight to see how many students attended and had a good time celebrating their rings with friends and fellow students."

Veronika Silkin '22 said in an interview with The Tech that she was glad to experience Ring Delivered "separately" from Senior Ball. Silkin added that "it was really nice to see many people in my class who I hadn't seen in a while."

Jamie Geng '22 said in an interview with The Tech that "there were some mixed reactions to Ring Delivered being postponed for two years. Some people went extra ham... and really leaned into being there with friends and enjoying the experience," but others "felt apathetic about it after having it delayed for so long." It was "a good vibe to be out with everyone having fun," Geng said.

# It's Dangerous to Go Alone!



## Take This.

photo@tech.mit.edu



# Discovering nature's properties through nonlinear solid mechanics

# The Cohen Mechanics Group's quest to model the growth and mechanical properties of biological materials

Have you ever wondered how biological materials like skin and muscle grow? Or why these materials behave the way they do?

These important questions are what researchers in the field of nonlinear solid mechanics seek to answer. The Cohen Mechanics Group headed by Dr. Tal Cohen, a researcher and associate professor of civil and mechanical engineering, was founded in 2016 in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering with the aim of first developing, then testing, theories in this field.

**Many potential applications of the VCCE method have emerged, especially within healthcare.**

According to Cohen, if you were to compress a material and measure its displacement in response to that load, you could then graph the relationship between the two. For sufficiently small forces, the relationship could be simplified to a linear curve — a straight line, for which the slope is the stiffness of the material. This linearization is extremely useful for engineers in predicting the behavior of structures. However, this model doesn't always apply in the real world, especially with softer materials that can undergo large deformations when a force is exerted on them. The study of non-linear solid mechanics goes further by subjecting materials to extreme stress or strain to observe their properties and behavior. Examining these extremes enables a more complete understanding of these materials.

The applications of this field are widespread, from creating stronger buildings to studying the nature of brain injuries. While these two examples seem vastly different, they are both the subject of the Cohen Mechanics Group's work.

Over its five-year existence, the group has gained many new insights in the field.

One that Cohen is particularly proud of is the lab's development of the volume-controlled cavity expansion (VCCE) method. In the VCCE method, water is injected into a chosen material like biological tissue. By controlling the volume of injected water and measuring pressure, stiffness and other material properties can be locally measured in the tissue. Prior to the development of this method, measuring these quantities in biological tissue was difficult depending on its size and shape, as well as the fact that tissue behaves differently inside or outside the body.

Many potential applications of the VCCE method have emerged, especially within healthcare. Hannah Varner, a mechanical engineering PhD student leading the VCCE effort in the Cohen Mechanics Group, is currently applying the method to model the properties of blood clots. Another major potential application is in guiding the surgical removal of cancerous tissue. When surgeons perform these operations, they often have to rely on the relative fitness of tissue to decide what to remove. The drawback of this approach is that it relies on human intuition. The VCCE method could provide quantifiable material properties of diseases that would make locating and removing cancerous cells more precise, improving the way that cancer is treated. Recently, the Cohen Mechanics Group has been working with local doctors to explore implementations of the VCCE method in a healthcare setting.

**"Everything we do starts with some curiosity due to observing something," she said.**

Another subject the group studies is how organisms grow. Rather than using the typical approach of reverse engineering a biological system and guessing at a correct model, the group breaks the system down into what Cohen describes as “the basic mechanisms that generate growth.” The



COURTESY OF THE COHEN MECHANICS GROUP

**A fracture is made using the VCCE method in PDMS**, a silicon-based polymer that the Cohen Mechanics Group often uses to simulate tissue.

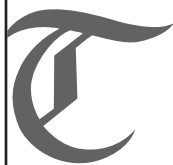
group creates models synthesizing those mechanisms together. These models guide their understanding of how organisms will grow, which can provide insight that can be used in the design of objects from non-biological materials.

Cohen emphasized how curiosity drives the group's members. "Everything we do starts with some curiosity due to observing something," she said. The group is "constantly encountering more and more phenomena to understand."

That strong curiosity, along with the interdisciplinary nature of the group's research, is displayed through the range of projects the group's ten members are currently undertaking. Speaking to these students, including Hanna Varner mentioned above, provides interesting insight into their projects. Tara Venkatadri, a fourth-year aerospace engineering major, has been working to better understand interfacial failure of adhesives and the effects of torsion on them. Mrityunjay Kothari, a postdoctoral associate with a PhD in solid mechanics, is studying biofilms — gatherings of bacteria that grow everywhere from our teeth to the bottom of ships —

and examining how they grow in different settings. Chockalingam Senthilnathan, an aerospace engineering PhD student is studying how shear shocks travel through the brain and can cause much more damage than previously thought. Though these projects may seem drastically different, they are rooted in the same fundamental questions. As Cohen described it, “we have different projects that are pulling along different directions, but we also collaborate a lot within the group, and things essentially merge.”

The Cohen Mechanics group has accomplished much in the five years since its founding, and with its many ongoing projects, it promises to continue producing interesting and insightful research. As the group looks towards the future, they hope to see their work applied in various fields and for their research to help others to better understand the world around us. As Cohen stated, solid mechanics “applies to so many things. That’s what’s so exciting about solid mechanics: it’s just in everything and everywhere.” Thus, there is no telling what the group might discover next.



Do you think YOU can fit the page better than we did?

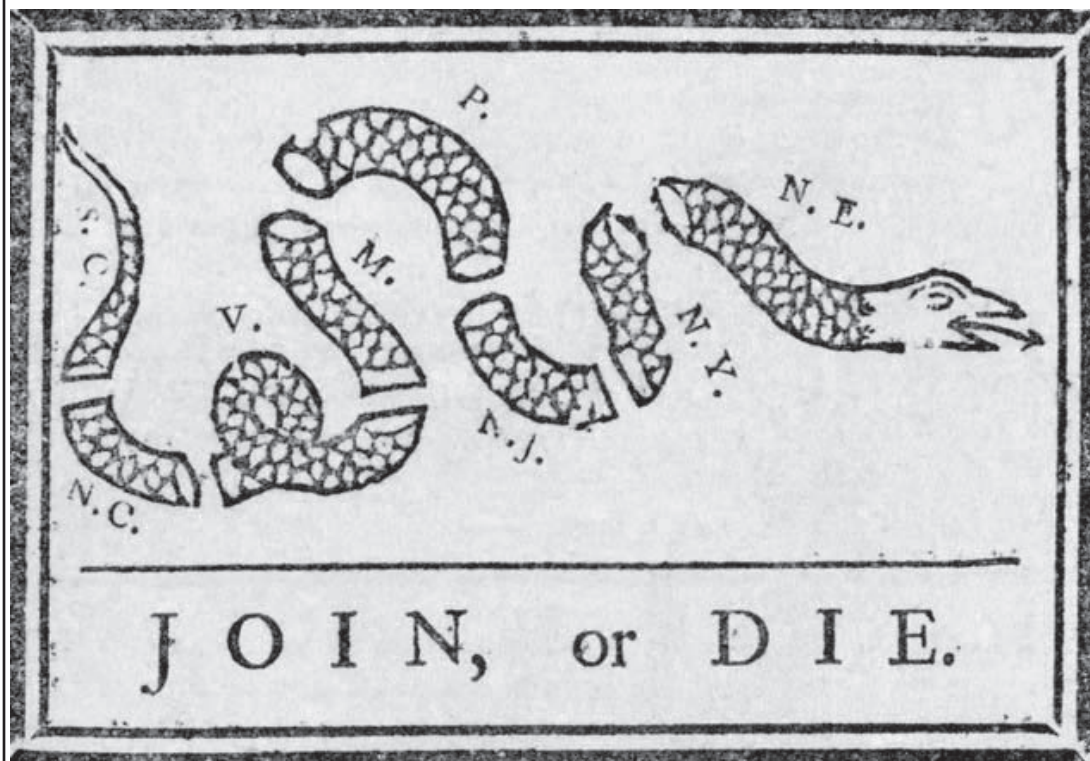
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Roses

Solution, page 11

	4	2			9			
		9	8	7			4	3
7				4				
				9		1	3	
3			7		4			5
	8	5		2				
				1				4
4	1			3	6	2		
			4			6	1	

Chocolate

Solution, page 11

60x		72x		24x	
					5
180x			13+		
96x			2-		3x
	2x			1-	
3		3-			6

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

For Valentine’s Day by Sally R. Stein

Solution, page 11

ACROSS

- 1 Applaud
- 5 Actress Stone or Watson
- 9 “Get lost!”
- 14 Cowpoke’s lasso
- 15 Christmas season
- 16 Northernmost New England state
- 17 Becomes more mature
- 18 Top of a mountain
- 19 Presses clothing
- 20 Sweet snacks in paper holders
- 23 When a plane is due in: Abbr.
- 24 Kitty or doggie
- 25 Walks wearily
- 28 Seeds in cherries
- 30 Closest pal, in texting
- 33 88-key instrument
- 34 Stand up
- 35 One-person performance
- 36 Very fancy restaurant meal
- 39 Affectionate greeting
- 40 Woodwind instrument
- 41 Enclosed, as a canary
- 42 Wide shoe width

- 43 Have to
- 44 Bus terminal
- 45 Rested on a chair
- 46 \_\_ de Cologne
- 47 Imported bubbly beverage
- 56 Gossipy story
- 57 Affectionate embraces
- 58 Sculptor’s soft material
- 59 Houston baseballer
- 60 Stare at
- 61 “There’s no place like \_\_”
- 62 Affirmative replies
- 63 Rind of an orange
- 64 Lambs’ mothers

DOWN

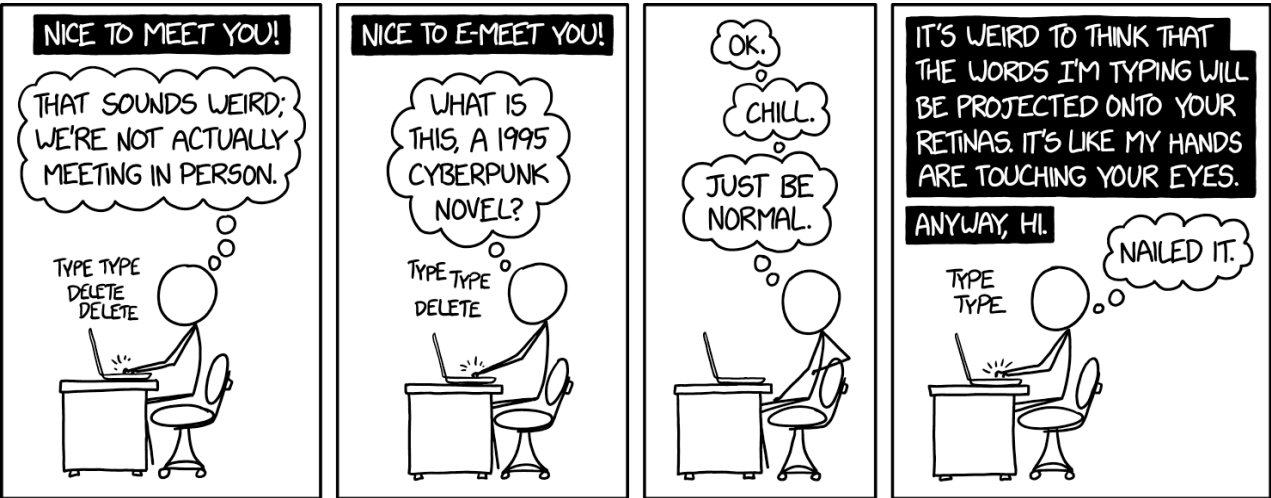
- 1 Lobster cousin
- 2 Corporate emblem
- 3 Top of a mountain
- 4 Mexican coin
- 5 Passes, as legislation
- 6 Sugary flavoring for a latte
- 7 Interoffice note
- 8 Actor Baldwin
- 9 Looks pleased
- 10 Diamond weight measure
- 11 Very funny person

- 12 Vampire novelist Rice
- 13 Untidy scene
- 21 Was nourished by
- 22 \_\_ for (chose)
- 25 Mischievous sprite
- 26 Run out, as subscriptions
- 27 Change for a \$5 bill
- 28 Turn on a single foot
- 29 “Now it makes sense”
- 30 Hand-struck drum
- 31 Group of naval vessels
- 32 General Motors’ Michigan rival
- 33 Chinese lap dog, for short
- 34 “Baby back” barbecue servings
- 35 Break suddenly
- 37 “Down” direction on a map
- 38 Freeze over
- 43 Word processor shortcuts
- 44 Old movie heroine “in distress”
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[2196] Nice to E-Meet You



I'm inside your head and I hate it. Please let me out.



Missing home less and becoming more proud of my home country

Thai food got a foothold in U.S. society following a diplomatic ploy. Dubbed *Thailand: Kitchen of the World*, Thai diplomats hoped to attract people to Thailand and boost tourism by impressing restaurant-goers in the states. The Thai Ministry of Commerce crafted three different formulas to take a piece of the country abroad, each one detailing ingredients, logistics, and everything else one would need to know about establishing a restaurant. The formulas differ in their specification of authenticity and luxuriousness. While I'm not sure if any of the Thai restaurants here actually use these formulas, it is nearly impossible to meticulously replicate a Thai restaurant in Cambridge, as it requires not only the most skillful chefs, but also the best artists and designers to decorate the interior and exterior, lay out the silverware, choose the materials, furniture, and so on, and per-

If you walk south along Massachusetts Ave. and turn at the new Toscanini's onto Main Street, you'd find yourself at **Maê Asian Eatery** <sup>mj</sup>, a restaurant with a commonly mispronounced name that translates to "mom." The mispronunciation is warranted once you look at our language — 44 consonants, 32 vowels, five tones and just a headache-inducing writing system. I love Maê for their main course and soup lunch sets, which keep me very full, but their food is a little polished. What I mean by polished is the opposite of a hasty street food meal made to order within a minute using an enormous wok, cooked with the most basic of bottled sauces. Neither end of the axis translates to less deliciousness though, as both taste incredibly delicious and saucy when done right. That said, I would recommend Maê for any casual meal or even something bigger — like a birthday dinner for twelve (speaking from experience).



*saeb* แซบ, stylized as Zaab, means delicious in a northeastern [1] Thai dialect. Here, you can experience a wider menu than at some other Thai restaurants in the area: papaya salads, or *tam* ตำ, and a type of meat salad called *larb* ลาบ, which are staples of Northeastern Thailand cuisine. 9Zaab also offers a wide array of street food, including my personal favorite, the *hoi tod* หอยทอด. *Hoi tod* is an imported dish, brought to Thailand by Chinese immigrants, which has since been naturalized and modified to be crispier and more peppery. The eggs, batter, and oysters merge together nicely with every oily crisp, and the Sriracha sauce served on the side always complements the texture. Tucked underneath the golden beauty and green garnish lies a soft bed of bean sprouts. 9Zaab is moderately priced, good for take-out, and though it is rather far, the authentic harder-to-find street food always serves as a reward for the walk.

A short walk from Porter Square is **Sugar and Spice**, decked out with Thai art and decorations, where an even wider range of regional food is realized in the menu as their own different sections, as well as some Thai desserts I haven't been able to find anywhere else around Boston [2]. Al-



[2] I recently discovered a great Thai dessert place in Thai Town all the way in Los Angeles, and I was in awe of what the tiny shop had packed within it.



though Sugar and Spice doesn't have desserts like the *khanom krok* ขนมครก I found in Thai Town in Los Angeles, it does have a rendition of *bua loi* บัวลอย that serves as a good introduction to Thai desserts, which feature ample amounts of coconut. *Bua loi* is a thick sweet creamy coconut soup with colorful flour balls and ground legume sprinkled on top. It is not overly sweet like some other kinds of dessert and a tad bit different from dessert you might find in C Fruit Life, a Taiwanese dessert place in Allston. Sugar and Spice has a homely atmosphere, and eating there transports me to the different parts of the country, including the less sweltering Northern Thailand, as I eat their *kang hung lay* แกงหุนลาย, a rather mild and mellow pork stew with pineapples served with sticky rice. The dish is a spice break for me, different from the very flavorful punch Thai food usually gives. This restaurant is in the middle on a scale of street to polished. It's quite a journey from campus but well worth it.

If you take a short walk or a T ride even further north to Davis Square at the edge of Cambridge, you'd come across **Dakzen**, which is technically *not* in Cambridge — but an inch away in Somerville. It is too good not to mention though, and before I ate there, I constantly heard my two other Thai-born-and-raised class of 2023 buddies rave about its authentic dishes. For a price as low as \$8.95, you can get “a homely *pad kaprao* ผัดกะเพรา that tastes like your mom’s cooking,” a classic, stir-fried meat and holy basil dish with garlic and chili. *Pad kaprao* is about as Thai as Thai food gets. On any street corner in any Thai city you can find dozens of cook-to-order restaurants on the streets that make it. Though this rice dish is worth drooling over, the restaurant’s specialty is noodles, as the name suggests — *daek* แดก [3] means “eat” and *sen* เส้น, stylized as Zen, means noodles. Their noodles are heavenly and flavorful and surprisingly faithful imitations of noodle restaurants back in Thailand. Beyond the food, Dakzen has the imitation down to every detail — the spice rack and containers, the famous *lampang* ลำปาง [4] chicken ceramic bowls ขอมลำนาง, and the steel soup spoons. Dakzen was rated Best in Boston 2019, and I agree.

If you trace your steps down Mass. Ave. south to Harvard Square, I would like to offer a eulogy to a now-closed restaurant that was my personal favorite freshman year. What's an article in 2022 without a mention

of the *pain de mie* or its consequences? **Spicies** was similar to 9Zaab in that it offered a wide array of street foods and crafted some of the most authentic dishes I could find near Cambridge. It went out of business after more than two decades of serving heavenly Thai food to the local community.

Circling back to Central Square, a bit further west into the residential areas, you can find **Nu-Do**, a newly opened noodle restaurant. With a minimalist interior consisting of a gray wall and chalkboard, the atmosphere in Nu-Do is very cozy. I've tried their *pad see ew* ผัดซีอิ๊ว, stir-fried noodles in soy sauce mixed with eggs and vegetables such as Chinese broccoli and highly recommend it. The chef adds a bit too much sauce, resulting in excess water, and sometimes undercooks the dish, making the noodles a bit too thick and chewy. Overall, though, the meal leaves me feeling satisfied. This dish is pretty polished as well. Their *kui chai* กุ๊ยจ๊าย appetizer, fried dough with garlic chives in crispy a square-cut shape, is also worth trying. Both these dishes are Chinese-imported and Thai-perfected. I'd also like to mention their saucy and slightly spicy Kaprao Udon, a ridiculous but appetizing mashup that swaps the usual Thai rice with a Japanese udon.

You can complete the tour by heading towards the Kendall/MIT Red Line station, bending left onto Third Street, and continuing to walk in the same eastward direction (think Toscanini's). **Similans** is housed within the same block and provides a neat dining experience. Again, wooden carvings and folk painting styles that scream Thai greet you upon entering, and the ornate tables and silverware are the cherry on top. It doesn't boast a large or diverse menu reflective of the different cuisines within Thailand nor is it the most authentic, but it still serves respectable Thai food. This is a place where you might come with a group and share dishes family-style or a place where you can order to cater to some 140 Thai students in the Greater Boston area. Plus, must I remind you that a refreshing gelato dessert is right around the corner at Toscanini's? I enjoyed their Three Taste Shrimp, also known as the *koong sam rod* กุ้งสามรส. The three tastes in the thick sauce are sour, sweet, and salty, with a hint of chili. Meanwhile, the shrimp was deep fried and flaky, which I personally am a big fan of. The dish also features rice and some boiled greens like broccoli and cauliflower. It's the familiar mixture of the well-proportioned,



ARUN WONGPROMMOON—THE TECH

**The Tom Yam Noodle Soup from Dakzen**, with its chicken ceramic bowl and stainless steel soup spoon, along with other delicious dishes in Thai restaurants around Cambridge clockwise in order of appearance.

bountiful flavors, a key characteristic of Thai food, that makes me fond of Similans.

As I write this on the Bangkok skytrain, I catch myself missing my second home from my actual home. In a week I'll be back on campus, this time bringing a piece of home to Cambridge, in the form of Thai dessert, to once again allow my friends to experience a taste of home. Thank you for joining me on this tour of the Thai food, and by association, Thai culture, of Cambridge in my debut article for *The Tech*.

**Summary**  
**Pepper Sky's:** Authenticity 3 out of 5, Price 3 out of 5, Accessibility 4 out of 5 (a short walk from campus).

**Maê Asian Eatery:** Authenticity 3.5 out of 5, Price 2.5 out of 5 especially for dinner, Accessibility 4 out of 5. If you're departing

from a class in Stata, it would be a shorter walk.

**Pai Kin Kao:** Authenticity 4 out of 5, Price 3 out of 5, Accessibility 3.5 out of 5.

**9Zaab:** Authenticity 4 out of 5, Price 3 out of 5, Accessibility 3 out of 5, though I'd give an extra point for the breadth of their menu.

**Sugar and Spice:** Authenticity 3.8 out of 5, Price 3 out of 5, Accessibility 2.5 out of 5, and a couple extra points for good regional representation.

**Dakzen:** Authenticity 4.5 out of 5, Price 5 out of 5, Accessibility 2.5 out of 5.

**Nu-Do:** Authenticity 3.3 out of 5, Price 4 out of 5, Accessibility 3.5 out of 5.

**Similans:** Authenticity 3.5 out of 5, Price 3 out of 5, Accessibility 3.5 out of 5, and an ice cream reward for being next to Tosci's.

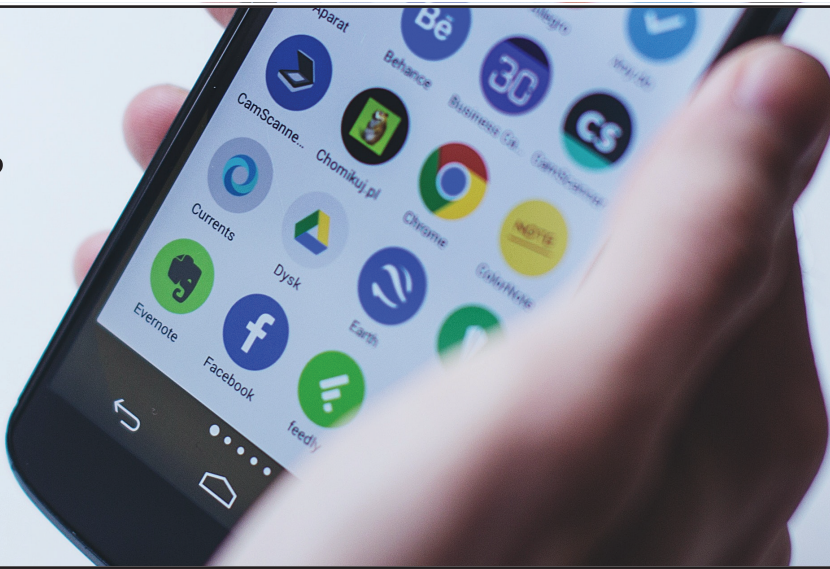
[3] I don't particularly like reading out the name of this restaurant because it incorporates a somewhat vulgar form of eat, meaning a more accurate translation of the restaurant name would be "fucking gobble up the noods."

[4] Lampang is a province in northern Thailand, southeast of the more popular Chiang Mai เชียงใหม่, known for its hot spring, waterfalls, lignite mine, and chicken ceramic bowls. It is the hometown of a fellow Thai sophomore here at MIT.

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# Free expression and academic freedom on campus are worth fighting for

*MIT must recommit to the values of open discussion and dissent*

Whatever your views are on DEI or MFE and whatever you think of Abbot's public comments, this cancellation is a clear sign that academic freedom at MIT is in peril. That many find Abbot's comments in favor of MFE offensive (including some members of the MIT Free Speech Alliance) is entirely to the point — protections of academic freedom ring hollow if they only apply to speech that offends no one. The fact that Abbot was an invited guest rather than a member of the MIT community and the fact that he was offered an alternative (less prestigious and less public) opportunity to speak about his research do not justify the cancellation of his original talk. With this decision, based purely on Abbot's sincerely held ideological perspective outside his scientific contributions, the MIT administration has signaled loud and clear that diverse perspectives on important topics of the day are not welcome on campus.

Why should we care about academic freedom and free expression on campus? Those who feel that free expression is an outdated concept have very short memories. The movement to protect free expression on campus was, until recently, the purview of the left, and was intimately tied in with the anti-Vietnam War movement and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The freedom to express unpopular, even upsetting or offensive, speech is crucial both to progressive social change and to the academic process. As individuals, it is deeply hypocritical to only stand up for the right to express our own views and not those we disagree with — freedom “for me but not for thee.” That is why the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) went to bat for a group of actual Nazis in the famous Skokie case in the late 1970s. They understood that limiting the fundamental right to free expression will inevitably silence the oppressed. As former president of the ACLU Nadine Strossen put it in her book *Hate*, such restrictions “are predictably enforced to suppress unpopular speakers and ideas, and too often they even are enforced to stifle speech of the vulnerable, marginalized minority groups they are designed to protect.” These words were specific to the legal protection of the First Amendment, but as Strossen makes clear, can be applied to free expression on campus as well. Specifically, the academic freedom of faculty to challenge the establishment is fundamental to the role that an academic institution like MIT must play in testing, debating, and discussing a diverse range of ideas about the important topics of the day, of which DEI clearly qualifies. As she writes, “In light of the enormous power of private universities... either to facilitate or stifle the free exchange of ideas and information... except in unusual circumstances, [private universities] should permit all expression

*This article was written by Melanie Soderstrom '98, Eric Rasmusen '84, and Jim Rutt '75 (President) on behalf of the MIT Free Speech Alliance. We can be contacted at [admin@mitfreespeech.org](mailto:admin@mitfreespeech.org), or Twitter @mitfreespeech.*

ROCK HOLMES?  
STIGASTIVE REPORTERS.  
QUESTIONS?  
AND COLLECTING EVIDENCE?  
HAM!

A cartoon illustration of a detective in a grey suit, white shirt, and black tie. He is wearing a black fedora and dark sunglasses. He is running towards the left, looking through a magnifying glass at a trail of ham slices on the ground. The ham slices are arranged in a line, leading from the bottom left towards the center. The detective is in a dynamic pose, with his right leg forward and his left leg back, suggesting he is in a hurry. The background is plain white.

In a news article about professor Gang Chen published two weeks ago in *The Tech*, U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins' name was misspelled as "Rachel Collins."

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GUEST COLUMN

# On Love, Truth, and Justice at MIT

*Truth-telling is a foundation to Love MIT well*

By Ufuoma Ovienmhada

*These remarks were originally prepared for MIT's 48th Annual Martin Luther King Celebration Luncheon held on Feb. 10, 2022.*

I Love MIT. Those are three words that I would usually *never* string together into a sentence.

Yet, at this moment, I find myself at the two-and-a-half year mark of dedicating my labor to MIT as the former president of the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) and as a student representative on not one but two different institute committees working on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and public safety, respectively. I've organized events on these topics. I've been in dozens of meetings with President Reif, Institute Community Equity Officer John Dozier, Chancellor Nobles, and others whom I all respect. In reflecting on the theme for this event, I honed in on the words "truth" and "love." I found quotes from the late feminist author bell hooks that read, "The heart of justice is truth-telling," and "There can be no love without justice." She uses a definition of Love from M. Scott Peck: "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." With these definitions in mind, I was forced to admit that through these labors, *I am* committed to the spiritual, *and* moral, *and* ethical growth of MIT. And thus I *do*, in fact, Love MIT. It's an agape love, an ongoing, unconditional concern for the well-being of MIT, the community inside it, and those it impacts.

Ruminating further on "truth" and "love," I came to the conclusion that to Love well, we must be willing to tell the truth. MIT's own value statement writes that we must be willing to "speak plainly about failings in our systems." So, it is in this spirit that I convey three inconvenient truths about the chasm between Martin Luther King Jr.'s values and MIT's actions.

Truth number one: The truth is MIT is an institute of higher learning and a global leader in research with a well-intentioned community, BUT, quoting MIT professor Ed Bertschinger (who was the first institute community equity officer), MIT is also comprised of a board of trustees known as "The Corporation" with its own agenda and internal politics that resists any change that would redress severe power imbalances. In my experiences working with senior administration, I've often been one of less than a handful of students on 25-30 person committees, despite students making up nearly half of the MIT population. My peers and I have fought for increased decision-making power as committee co-chairs, but even in the case where we do have a student as a co-chair, we are not privy to relevant documents nor do we have decision-making power or influence on meeting times. Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed of an integration that was not merely a "romantic mixing of colors" but a "real sharing of power and responsibility." At MIT, we aren't sharing nearly enough power or responsibility.

Truth number two: The truth is MIT released its boldest Climate Action Plan in 2021, BUT it is still a shareholder in fos-

sil fuels that continue to produce climate change impacts disproportionately affecting Black, brown and indigenous people. I'm Nigerian by heritage. Since 2010, the Shell oil company, which MIT has received donations from, has leaked over 17.5 million liters of oil into the Niger Delta region, where my mother grew up — that's roughly seven Olympic-size swimming pools of oil. This is personal, and this is just a snapshot of the global devastation caused by fossil fuels. How can MIT hope to achieve its mission to "make a better world" while actively engaging with companies that poison the water and land in communities all over the world? This is an overt complicity in unbridled capitalism, which King despised and believed has "outlived its usefulness."

Truth number three: The truth is MIT does have a model of working with graduate students that has produced some positive change, BUT this model often moves at a snail's pace to accommodate those with the most privilege or ignores inconvenient truths and inconvenient recommendations. I'll offer the example of the yet-to-be-completed five year Strategic Action Plan to address DEI for the years 2021-2026. Wait ... isn't it 2022? The pace of change and mistreatment student leaders have experienced using existing MIT models have left over 2500 grad workers with the conviction that we need a graduate student union to secure legally-binding, lasting change. On Feb. 1, the chancellor and provost sent out an email communicating MIT's stance, that they believe "MIT's long-standing partner-

ship with graduate students is a better path forward than unionization." To that, I will paraphrase King, who was enthusiastically pro-union. In fact, he was assassinated at a labor union-organizing campaign. He says "our needs are identical with labor's needs. That is why the labor-baiter is virtually always a twin-headed creature spewing anti-Negro epithets from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from the other mouth." As anti-negro epithets may not be as common today, I'll summarize the core of King's stance in a different way — rhetoric that is not enthusiastically pro-labor union cannot be enthusiastically anti-racist.

These three truths may seem unrelated, but they are all connected through issues of capital and hierarchy. The truth is, the bottleneck to progress at MIT is not a lack of knowledge or resources; it is an administration infatuated with wealth and intoxicated by power. It's an aversion to truth-telling, and a scarcity of agape love; it's power without love, which, in King's words, is "reckless and abusive."

I Love MIT. Those are three words that I would usually never string together into a sentence. But, *I am* committed to the spiritual, *and* moral, *and* ethical growth of MIT. I'm practicing my love by telling these inconvenient truths. If you Love MIT too, to Love well, we must be willing to tell the truth, then take palpable measures to bend the arc of MIT's history towards justice.

*Ufuoma Ovienmahda is a fourth-year graduate student-worker in AeroAstro and served as a co-President of the BGSA for two-and-a-half years.*

OPEN LETTER

## An open letter regarding MIT Dining changes and enhancements

MIT is known for solving complex problems. While it's not nearly as momentous as landing Americans on the moon or developing low-cost emergency ventilators, operating the campus dining program comes with complex challenges and constraints that are seldom visible to meal plan subscribers and dining hall patrons.

That's why in June 2019, Vice Chancellor and Dean for Student Life Suzy Nelson requested the formation of a working group — consisting of students, heads of house, and staff — to review the student meal plan structure and to propose a new approach, informed by student input, that emphasizes quality and variety, accessibility, and financial sustainability. In subsequent months, the Meal Plan Working Group reviewed the house dining program's features and financial parameters, discussed updated plan commitments, and ultimately proposed a new dining plan structure to Dean Nelson

and former Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart, which was previewed at a community forum on March 5, 2020.

Just a week later, MIT shifted into pandemic mode; campus life was completely disrupted and the dining plan implementation was put on hold for the 2020-21 academic year while undergraduates and house team members living on campus were enrolled in a special meal plan subsidized by MIT.

As MIT started work on getting back to pre-pandemic operating conditions last spring, Campus Dining implemented the first phase of the revised meal plan, which included new minimum commitment levels for the Class of 2025. The new minimums will apply to each subsequent incoming class, with the plan reaching full implementation with the Class of 2028. The old minimum commitments will phase out with the Classes of 2023 and 2024. Staff from MIT Dining in the Division of Student Life presented the revised plan at events throughout 2021, including virtual CPW in April, orientation in August, and discussions with the DormCon House Dining Committee last fall.

In spite of the necessary changes made to support MIT's pandemic response, MIT Dining and culinary partner Bon Appétit (BA) continued to work on improving facili-

ties and offerings throughout the last two years. For example:

**System-wide:** BA continues to hire new chefs to implement fresh ideas and elevate quality across the system based on the spring 2021 student dining survey results, which suggested that food quality and variety were among meal plan subscribers' top concerns. Additionally, BA's director of culinary operations and regional dietician updated staff training to focus on food quality and introduced new menus that provide a broader selection of meals, such as halal entrées at all houses. Don't just take my word for it — if you haven't stopped by a campus dining location recently, I encourage you to visit one of our locations to experience these improvements for yourself.

**Maseeh Hall:** The entire allergen-free kitchen encompassing the Oasis Station in the Howard Dining Hall is being overhauled to support students with food allergies or who follow special diets. This includes adding new grills, a pasta cooker, and a salad bar specifically for gluten-free items. Also, a new gluten-free pantry and an updated gluten-free station opened in the fall.

**New Vassar:** The dining facility opened at full capacity in the fall, including lunch hours. Students told the Meal Plan Working Group that crowds at Maseeh prevented

them from eating a mid-day meal. Since New Vassar opened for lunch, we have seen lunchtime usage of Maseeh and New Vassar start to balance out.

**Baker:** Taking cues from national trends toward healthier, fresher, greens-forward meals, BA introduced the Green Lite salad station last fall.

**Simmons:** The popular late-night snack station moved to Simmons' servery and brought on a new menu that reflects some of the most popular items served at Maseeh's late-night station.

The house dining program's success relies on a continuing partnership between students, house teams, staff, and BA, with great reliance placed on community feedback. As a result, Dining will continue the student satisfaction survey, which has shaped these and other recent program enhancements after it was started last fall in cooperation with student leaders. We will keep communication channels open between students, dining staff, and campus dining so we can keep improving — to let us know what you think, meal plan subscribers can participate in the next dining satisfaction survey and anyone can share feedback on house or campus dining any time through [foodstuff@mit.edu](mailto:foodstuff@mit.edu).

*Mark Hayes  
Director, Campus Dining*

OPINIONOPINIONOPINIONOPINIONOPINIONOPINIONOPINIONOPINIONOPINIONOPINION

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GUEST COLUMN

# I’m voting yes for the Graduate Student Union because MIT continues to fail its student veterans

*Without a union, graduate students will continue to be seen as a resource to be managed rather than individuals who deserve a seat at the table*

By Michael Luu

Before coming to MIT, I served in the U.S. Army as an infantry soldier. Most of my time in service was spent deployed in Eastern Europe, conducting NATO ally reassurance missions and counter-Russian aggression operations after the annexation of Crimea. Since being accepted to the MIT AeroAstro program in 2019, however, MIT has failed to correctly certify my Veterans Affairs (VA) educational benefits. MIT was noncompliant with federal regulations and unresponsive to my calls to action. These educational benefits are guaranteed in the Post-9/11 GI bill, which provides tuition and housing allowances to veterans who honorably served the country. These benefits enable veterans to gain skills that will help them transition to civilian life through educational and economic support. These benefits have allowed me to begin a new career which is useful and exciting. I joined the MIT Student Veterans Association (SVA) to advocate for the improvement of this situation for all MIT veterans.

Since August 2020, the SVA has highlighted the lack of support for and neglect of the veteran community here at MIT. This has included the lack of a Veteran Support Office, access to coordinated VA health-care, and data on the identity and number of veterans we have on campus. Even with strong support from the Institute Community and Equity Office and faculty like Professor Amy Glasmeier, the issues brought forth by the SVA are largely ignored or marginalized.

The problem was left to fester for over two years, and in Fall 2021, reportedly at least 20 student veterans did not receive their VA benefits worth approximately \$3 million in tuition, nor did we receive our \$3,000 per month stipend. I personally lacked the funds to pay bills and living expenses, which required me to use emergency savings. I spent countless hours having to coordinate and navigate VA offices, VA policies, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education staff, and federal regulations. This took significant time and attention away from

my research. Other veterans with families who relied on the stipend for income faced further financial hardships as they had dependents to support. MIT’s administration did not respond to questions or provide support or assistance for months. It wasn’t until the story was covered by *military.com* that MIT’s administration began to respond in an attempt to deflect the negative press and poor optics. MIT frequently left even the president and other leaders of the SVA out of conversations, meetings, and planning sessions regarding veterans issues.

I joined the MIT Graduate Student Union because without a union, **graduate students will continue to be seen as a resource to be managed rather than what we truly are — workers and partners in research who deserve a seat at the table.** It is clear to me after working with the highest levels of MIT’s administration that graduate students still lack legitimate power and a voice in the policies and decisions that affect us. Despite the administration’s claims, the existing avenues accessible by

student groups like the SVA, Graduate Student Council, or Black Graduate Student Association do not have sufficient power to affect change on behalf of graduate student-workers. As the leaders of these organizations will attest, student groups have the power to make suggestions for improvement, but without the accountability our union would provide, MIT often delays acting on or completely dismisses student feedback. By forming a union, graduate student-workers at MIT can ensure that our problems are taken seriously by MIT administration and that our rights are protected by a legally enforceable contract.

MIT is failing to meet the federal expectations they agreed to. Having the VA benefits that veterans are entitled to at MIT would make the institution more accessible for all veterans. I would be spending less time worried about my finances and more time focused on my coursework and research. Join me by signing your union card today and voting yes on forming a union.

GUEST COLUMN

# Imprudent, immoral, illegal

*MIT’s failure to divest from the fossil fuel industry is not just unethical — it is also against the law*

By Aaliya Hussain, Nathan Schwatal, and Mitali Chowdhury

On February 16, MIT Divest filed a legal complaint with the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General to investigate the MIT Corporation’s continued financial investment in the fossil fuel sector. Frustrated with universities’ insufficient action in the face of the climate crisis, our student divestment campaign and similar groups from Princeton, Yale, Stanford, and Vanderbilt each prepared a legal complaint with the assistance of attorneys from the Climate Defense Project. Signatures from prominent professors, community members, climate scientists, elected officials, student organizations, alumni, and national environmental organizations supporting the cause show that there is widespread agreement that investments in fossil fuels are not just immoral and financially irresponsible — they are also illegal.

The complaint is a request to Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey to investigate the MIT Corporation’s conduct regarding its management of MIT’s \$27.4 billion endowment and use the Attorney General’s enforcement powers to order the Corporation to cease its investments in fossil fuels. Under the Massachusetts Uniform Prudential Management of Institutional Funds Act, the MIT Corporation has a fiduciary duty to invest with consideration for the university’s “charitable purposes” — a duty that distinguishes nonprofit institutions from other investors. By investing a portion of MIT’s endowment in the fossil fuel industry, the Corporation is violating that duty and failing to “act in good faith and with loyalty.” Putting our university’s endowment into an industry actively contributing

to the rapidly evolving climate catastrophe, while continuing to lie and spread misinformation about the role of fossil fuels in creating this crisis, is not investing with prudence as the law requires.

MIT Divest’s complaint is another reminder that MIT does not function within a vacuum. The MIT administration has shied away from taking clear stances against fossil fuel companies due to the “risk” of “becoming perceived as just another partisan voice.” But this so-called “risk” is no risk — it is the unfortunate reality for anyone who acknowledges the scientific consensus and stands for the truth about climate change. Fossil fuel companies are intensely political and partisan in their promotion of their own agendas and obstruction of climate action — just ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, BP, and the American Petroleum Institute alone spent over \$400 million from 2011 to 2021 lobbying the U.S. government. Furthermore, the industry has conducted climate misinformation campaigns for nearly half a century, despite possessing evidence linking fossil fuel burning to climate change decades before the general public. By remaining invested in fossil fuel stocks on the false grounds of political neutrality, MIT not only willfully blinds itself to the political ramifications of its investments but also funds the efforts of the fossil fuel industry to twist truth and science into political theater.

Refusal to divest is also a deliberate, direct stance upholding the status quo — and the climate status quo is grossly unjust. Climate change exacerbates inequity at every scale. Affordable housing units within low-lying regions here in Massachusetts are especially vulnerable to flooding from rising sea levels and intensified weather events.

Within the U.S., if fossil fuel usage continues to rise, the counties in the bottom five percent of income are projected to suffer climate-associated economic damages of 5.5% to 27.6% of total county income while those in the top five percent are expected to face much smaller income losses of up to 4.2% or even small gains of up to 1.1%. Globally, climate change has already created an additional 25% GDP disparity between the wealthiest and poorest countries and is predicted to continue worsening global economic inequity.

Precedent for taking clear, unequivocal stances against injustice — even when those stances can be construed as political — can be found in MIT’s own history. In 2007, MIT declared that it “will not invest in a company whose actions or expressed attitudes are abhorrent to MIT” in response to calls from student activists to divest its endowment from funds linked to acts of genocide against the Darfuri people in western Sudan. More recently, the MIT administration has consistently demonstrated its support for Professor Gang Chen, an MIT faculty member targeted by the U.S. Department of Justice under the China Initiative, a project widely criticized by civil rights activists as discriminatory against individuals of Chinese heritage. We at MIT Divest applaud the MIT administration for standing against immoral and unjust actions in both of these instances.

We demand that MIT once again recognizes the political ramifications of all of the institution’s actions. We demand that MIT consciously chooses to uphold the principles of truth and justice. And we demand that MIT takes action **now**.

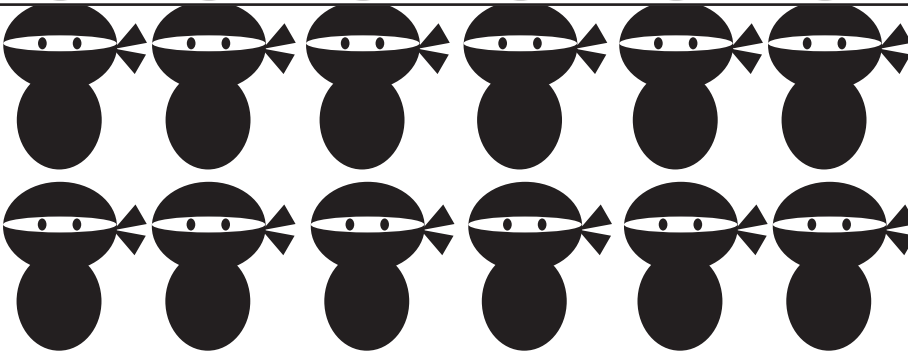
As the effects of climate change continue to debilitate our planet and its people, the

need to act becomes more dire by the second. We may not be able to reverse the damage that has been done, but we can prevent further catastrophe for ourselves and our descendants. It will take drastic changes, however, and include technological advances to be developed here at MIT. Yet, even as our institution strives to foster this innovation, our leadership continues to contribute to the problem by maintaining their investments in fossil fuels. Until the industry loses the support of respected institutions, they will continue decimating our climate for profit.

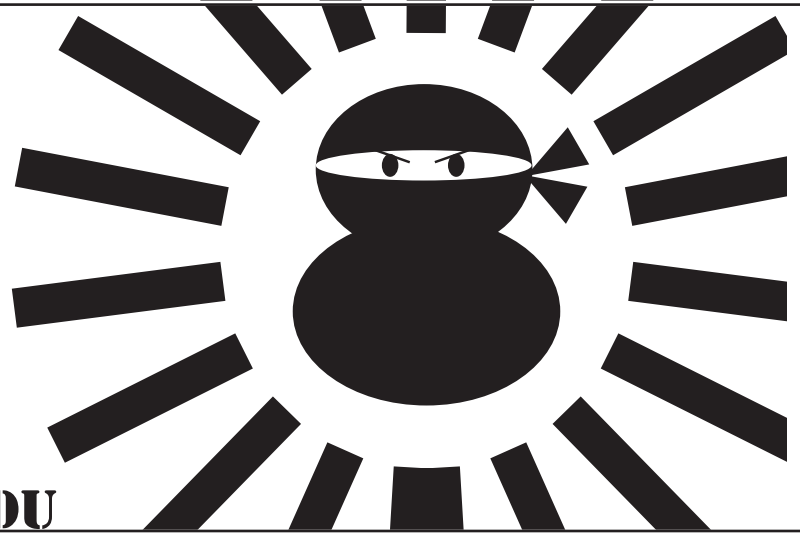
We know that MIT has the power to put its money where its mouth is and remove our investments from fossil fuels. In doing so, we will join a growing coalition of organizations who are not afraid to challenge the status quo and save our planet. Furthermore, due to MIT’s status as a leading academic institution, divesting at MIT will catalyze further climate action around the world.

This series of legal complaints illustrates the growing legal opposition to fossil fuel investment. The majority of students and faculty on our campus, as well as many prominent figures in our area, support divestment. If it takes legal action for MIT to listen to its community, uphold the truth, and stand against global injustice, what does that say about what this institution really stands for? In order for MIT to truly live up to its mission statement and continue to be a leader in changing the world for the better, there is only one option: **divestment now**.

*Aaliya Hussain ’25 is a first-year student.  
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## VIVIAN'S REFLECTIONS

## Eating tofu pudding again

Not Proustian, but close enough

**By Vivian Hir**  
*STAFF WRITER*

I finish a warm bowl of hot and sour soup at a small restaurant in New York City's Chinatown. I check my watch. It is 6:15 p.m., and I have some time to kill before heading to the Museum of Illusions at 8. I am full, but a gut feeling tells me that I have to eat something memorable. I mean, when will I get to eat delicious, authentic Chinese food again? I decide to search for some food recommendations nearby. As I scroll through an article titled "Guide to Manhattan Chinatown" on Resy, nothing stands out to me until I see the words "tofu pudding" in a review of Fong On, an old family shop famous for its tofu pudding. Finding this place feels like hitting the jackpot. The last time I had tofu pudding was in Taiwan more than five years ago. I enjoyed eating this dessert while living there, but the absence of tofu pudding in the United States made me cherish the dessert even more.

There are enticing desserts all around me, such as Keki's bouncy cheesecake or the original Chinatown ice cream, but I don't hesitate to decide on tofu pudding. I had to go to Fong On. I couldn't deprive myself of this sensory experience anymore. Even though I could still remember the heavenly taste of tofu pudding, these vivid memories became fainter over time. Eating tofu pudding was the closest thing I had to a time machine, allowing me to travel back to my late childhood days in Taiwan.

After taking a couple of detours and walking through nearly a foot of unplowed snow on Forsyth Street, I finally see the store's sign. I expect to see something that evokes the shop I frequented in Taiwan: an old wooden sign with Chinese calligraphy, some red lanterns outside, or a simple indoor layout with wooden stools indicating both the store's age and coziness. But it is the opposite of what I fantasized. The shop's spotless white interior makes me think of a

newly built franchise instead of a traditional family-run business. The street is empty and no one is inside. I start to panic. Are my expectations of this shop far from reality? But it is too late for me to turn around because I already spent ten minutes walking here, so I enter the store.

The menu is presented simply on a chalkboard, yet it overwhelms me. Taro balls, aloe, grass jelly, red bean, the list goes on. What do I choose from these toppings? Not to mention that I also need to decide between ginger, brown sugar, or almond syrup. I want to eat all of the toppings again, but I am limited to three choices. My brain feels paralyzed. I sheepishly ask the shop worker the difference between their main offerings. I wonder why ordering tofu pudding, a once-familiar habit, feels so foreign to me. I can spend another minute or two thinking about which toppings I like the most, but my intuition tells me to order the Green Machine – tofu pudding topped with mung beans, tapioca pearls, and aloe. I often had cold mung bean soup as a simple summer treat back at home, but its pairing with tofu pudding makes it sound refreshing. Maybe it was the simultaneous feeling of familiarity and novelty that drew me into this combination. Maybe it was the craving for sweet mung beans that reminded me of home, aspects that I couldn't bring with me to college. Picking this dessert out of countless possibilities simply felt right.

Because the shop is designed for take-out, I have nowhere to sit down and eat besides the lonely bench in a tiny patch of green space across from Canal Street. It is 16 degrees outside and dark. As I gingerly pour the ginger syrup onto the tofu pudding, I can't contain my excitement. It is this typical Chinese dessert sitting in my lap that can act as a key to unlock memories I have forgotten.

The moment I take my first bite, a flood of wonderful feelings comes rushing towards me. I enter an utter state of bliss. The soft, warm, silky, sweet tofu melts in my mouth.

This sensation is what I need the most on this cold winter day. Eating the dessert feels like a gentle kiss on the lips. The ginger's strong flavor conjures recollections of the ginger tea that my mom made me when I had a sore throat. Growing up, I detested the burning, hot sensation of ginger, but now I love the syrup's sudden sharpness that makes my tongue tingle and tickle. Eating the tofu pudding drenched in ginger syrup provides me with a sense of security and the comfort of home and family, despite being on the opposite side of the country. Combining the chewy tapioca pearls with tofu pudding makes the pearls taste so much more satisfying, a feeling I never experienced when drinking boba. The mushy yet granular mung beans make it hard for me to slow down and truly savor each morsel. Trying the juicy, gelatinous aloe topping for the first time with tofu pudding feels strange at first, but ends up being electrifying.

nonchalance and carefree attitude that was a part of my younger identity, only to dwindle over time as I grew older.

After I finish my tofu pudding and leave Chinatown, I still think about its lingering taste when I take the 6 train uptown. More eventful things happened throughout the trip, from touring the Brooklyn Museum to visiting the Met, yet this experience stands out from the rest. I wonder whether I can classify this event as a Proustian moment, a phenomenon in which sensory stimuli involuntarily evoke forgotten but significant memories. Although the emotions I experienced paralleled Proust's madeleine scene to a great extent, I can't quite label this incident as Proustian because I consciously chose to eat tofu pudding beforehand to elicit memories. Unlike Proust, I didn't start off not knowing why the food's scent or taste made me feel so nostalgic.

**The physical warmth  
of the dessert brings  
back a familial  
warmth.**

I am alone near a busy intersection in the freezing weather, but eating the tofu pudding makes my surroundings vanish. The physical warmth of the dessert brings back a familial warmth. I reminisce about the many times my family went to the tofu pudding shop after our monthly dinners at the neighboring dumpling restaurant, sitting together and sharing customized bowls of tofu pudding. These were the times when everyone in the family was happy and at peace. I feel like I am back in my ten-year-old self once again, content with the joys in life as simple as tofu pudding. As a kid, my satisfaction didn't require the constant validation of test scores or awards. All I needed was a yummy treat. As I eat, I embrace the

**More eventful things happened throughout the trip, from touring the Brooklyn Museum to visiting the Met, yet this experience stands out from the rest.**

Despite not falling under that precise definition, this small yet meaningful experience of the trip is something I will treasure for the rest of my life. I started this quest for tofu pudding with the intention of revisiting Taiwan, but my actual purpose turned out to be about going back to childhood and immersing myself in nostalgia. I know that this experience will never be a substitute for childhood experiences, but it is still one step closer to reliving the past, something that I thought was long gone and out of my reach.

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VS

VS

VS

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### Solution to Roses

from page 5

8	4	2	3	5	9	7	6	1
1	6	9	8	7	2	5	4	3
7	5	3	6	4	1	9	2	8
6	7	4	5	9	8	1	3	2
3	2	1	7	6	4	8	9	5
9	8	5	1	2	3	4	7	6
5	9	6	2	1	7	3	8	4
4	1	8	9	3	6	2	5	7
2	3	7	4	8	5	6	1	9

### Solution to Chocolate

from page 5

1	5	3	6	2	4
2	6	4	1	3	5
5	3	1	4	6	2
6	4	2	5	1	3
4	2	6	3	5	1
3	1	5	2	4	6

### Solution to Valentine's

from page 5

C	L	A	P	E	M	M	A	S	C	R	A	M					
R	O	P	E	N	O	E	L	M	A	I	N	E					
A	G	E	S	A	C	M	E	I	R	O	N	S					
B	O	X	O	F	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	S			
				E	T	A		P	E	T							
			P	L	O	D	S	P	I	T	S	B	F	F			
			P	I	A	N	O	R	I	S	E	S	S	O	L	O	
			E	X	P	E	N	S	I	V	E	D	I	N	N	E	R
			K	I	S	S	O	B	O	E	C	A	G	E	D		
			E	E	E		M	U	S	T	D	E	P	O	T		
						S	A	T			E	A	U				
			F	R	E	N	C	H	C	H	A	M	P	A	G	N	E
			R	U	M	O	R		H	U	G	S		C	L	A	Y
			A	S	T	R	O		O	G	L	E		H	O	M	E
			Y	E	S	E	S		P	E	E	L		E	W	E	S

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